

REMARKS

The Office Action mailed April 1, 2004, has been reviewed and the Examiner's comments have been carefully considered. Claims 1-20 remain pending and are submitted for reconsideration.

Additionally, Applicants acknowledge with appreciation the withdrawal of the finality of the previous Office Action and the allowance of claims 6-9.

35 U.S.C. § 103 Rejections

Claims 1-5 and 10-20 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,568,663 (Brown) in view of U.S. Patent No 2,421,228 (White). Of these claims, claims 1, 2, 4, 10, 11, 17, and 20 are independent. As explained further below, the rejection should be withdrawn because a *prima facie* case of obviousness has not been established. In particular, the cited references do not disclose, teach, or suggest all the features of the claimed invention.

By way of background, Applicants note that an object of the invention of White "is to provide a coupling which is simple to connect and disconnect." (White at col. 1, lines 2-4.) Similarly, the coupling of Brown is disconnected by unscrewing the gas bottle 34 from the internally threaded cylindrical stem 26 and then plugging the air intake valve 24 with a plug. (Brown at col. 4, line 38-40, 44-46; col. 5, lines 4-6.) In contrast, the present application discloses an inflator configured so that the orifice member and the diffuser "are fixed to each other so as not to be removed from each other." (Specification at para. [0040].) The specific differences between the claimed invention and the cited references are discussed below.

Claims 1, 10, and 20

The cited references do not disclose, teach, or suggest a projection that "extend[s] only partially around a periphery" of the receiving member or the bottle, as recited in claims 1, 10, and 20. The Office Action acknowledges that Brown does not disclose "projections extending only partially around the periphery of the bottle" but contends that White teaches "a coupling used to modify a previously threaded coupling into a bayonet type connector (inherently having a projection extending only partially around the periphery of the bottle) for the purpose of a quick connection between two components and preventing leakage due to

pressure of a fluid flowing there through.” (Office Action at pp. 2-3.) The Office Action further asserts that “[i]t would have been obvious . . . to use the coupling as taught by White with the device of Brown in order to increase the speed in which the inflator may be attached.” (Office Action at pp. 2-3.)

Applicants respectfully traverse the assertion in the Office Action that White inherently discloses a projection extending only partially around the periphery of the bottle. As shown in Fig. 1, White discloses a coupling element 1 “having a plurality of bayonet slots 6” and a coupling element 2 “provided with locking lugs 11 receivable in the bayonet slots 6 of element 1.” (White at col. 1, lines 36-46.) The coupling elements 1 and 2 are secured together when the coupling element 2 “is connected with the element 1 and turned so as to position the locking lugs 11 as indicated in Fig. 1.” (White at col. 1, line 59 to col. 2, line 1.) Thus, White discloses discrete locking lugs 11, as shown in Figs. 1 and 2. Nothing in the disclosure of White teaches or suggests that the locking lugs 11 “[extend] only partially around the periphery” of the coupling element 2 as called for in claims 1, 10, and 20, and the Office Action has not presented any reasoning supporting the assertion that such a feature is inherent. In relying on a theory of inherency, the Examiner “must provide a basis in fact and/or technical reasoning to reasonably support the determination that the allegedly inherent characteristic necessarily flows from the teachings” of the cited references. MPEP § 2112.IV. For at least this reason, the cited references do not disclose, teach, or suggest all the features of the claimed invention. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of claims 1, 10, and 20 is respectfully requested.

Claims 3 and 12-16 depend from claims 1 and 10, respectively, and are allowable therewith without regard to further patentable limitations contained therein. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of claim 3 and 12-16 is respectfully requested.

Claims 2, 4, 11, and 17

Similarly, the cited references do not disclose, teach, or suggest “a guide groove for receiving the projection” as called for in claim 2 or “a key groove” as called for in claims 4, 11, and 17. The Office Action contends that “Brown as modified further discloses a bayonet-type connector that is known to have a guide groove, a key groove and a key that rests in the key groove to prevent releasing of the connection.” (Office Action at p. 3.) Applicants

respectfully traverse the assertion in the Office Action that Brown as modified by White discloses a guide groove or a key groove.

There is no disclosure in Brown of a guide groove or a key groove, and White discloses only the bayonet slots 6. As shown in Figs. 1 and 4, the bayonet slots 6 are elongated holes or openings in a cylindrical socket 5 of the coupling element 1. The claimed invention, however, requires grooves. As commonly understood and as shown in Fig. 1 of the present application, a groove is a long, narrow channel or depression and is clearly distinguishable from the slots 6 of White, which are long, narrow apertures, as shown in Fig. 1 of White. Moreover, the connection of White does not have key grooves both on the bottle and on the receiving member as called for in claim 4. For at least these reasons, the cited references do not disclose, teach, or suggest all the features of the claimed invention. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of claims 2, 4, 11, and 17 is respectfully requested.

Claims 5, 17, and 18 depend from claims 4 or 17 and are allowable therewith without regard to further patentable limitations contained therein. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of claims 5, 17, and 18 is respectfully requested.

Conclusion

In view of the foregoing remarks, Applicants believe the application is now in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration of the application is respectfully requested. If there are any questions regarding the prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned attorney at the phone number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,

Date 7/1/04

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